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ABSTRACT

Challenges against library materials that were reported to the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse by Oregon libraries during its second full year of operation totalled 34 books, 13 of which were owned by public libraries and 21 by school libraries. The first challenge against an art exhibit in a public library was also reported. In 25 of the 34 cases, the materials were retained in the library through decisions made by local authorities; in three cases, access to materials was restricted, and in two cases, the materials were reclassified. Materials were removed from two school libraries with challenges against two titles still pending at the end of the fiscal year. The art exhibit was retained for the full month it had been scheduled for. Objections to library materials continued to be focused on stories or illustrations considered to be too scary or violent, language which some call "bad" or "profane," sexual references, and books with perceived or real occult, witchcraft, or satanic references. Specific information about the challenges reported in 1988-89 is provided in a list that is organized by type of library and the name of the library where the challenges occurred. In approximate chronological order by the date of the resolution of the challenges, the list includes summaries of both the objections and events for each title. Following this list, information is given on assistance provided by the clearinghouse during the year and cooperative and educational activities in which it was involved. A statement of the goals and objectives of the clearinghouse concludes the report. (BBM)

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Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

Second Annual Report

July 1, 1988 - June 30, 1989

Coordinator, Mary Ginnane, (503) 378-2112

Introduction

The *Second Annual Report* of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse summarizes Clearinghouse activities during the time period between July 1, 1988 and June 30th, 1989. As will be seen, the second full year of Clearinghouse activities saw more challenges against library materials being reported and more assistance being provided to Oregon libraries than was documented in the *First Annual Report*. Following the summary of challenges reported and the details on each challenge, will be found information on assistance provided by the Clearinghouse, and cooperative and educational activities in which the Clearinghouse was involved. The *Second Annual Report* concludes with a statement of the goals and objectives of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse.

Summary of Challenges Reported

A total of 34 books were reported to the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse as being formally challenged between July 1, 1988 and June 30th, 1989. Thirteen of the challenged items were owned by public libraries and 21 titles were owned by school libraries. A formal challenge is defined here as a written "Request for Reconsideration" or "Statement of Concern" submitted by a group or individual to a library. In addition, the first challenge against an art exhibit in a public library was reported to the Clearinghouse.

In 25 of the 34 cases, the materials were retained in the library through decisions made by librarians, school principals or superintendents, reconsideration committees, library boards, and/or school boards. In three cases access to materials was restricted and in two cases materials were reclassified. Materials were removed from two school libraries. The removal of James Baldwin's novel *If Beale Street Could Talk* from a high school library received statewide media attention. The challenges against two titles are still in progress and final decisions are pending. The art exhibit continued to be displayed for the full month scheduled for the exhibit.

Objections to library materials continue to be focused on stories or illustrations that are considered too scary or violent, language which some call "bad" or "profane", sexual references, and books with perceived or real occult, witchcraft, or satanic references. While the number of challenges reported to the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse doubled over the number reported in the *First Annual Report*, no assessment is yet being made by the Clearinghouse that the level of censorship attempts is increasing in Oregon. The increased number of challenges reported reflects success in publicizing the existence of the Clearinghouse and is indicative of the awareness and cooperation of Oregon library staff in reporting challenges to the Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse anticipates that it will take three to five years of data collection before a baseline of censorship attempts in Oregon can be established against which annual comparisons can more accurately be made.

Specific information about the challenges reported to the Clearinghouse in 1988-89 is given below, organized according to library type and arranged by name of the library, where the challenges occurred. The list is in approximate chronological order according to the date upon which decisions about the challenges were finalized. The formal challenges were all submitted by individuals who did not identify themselves as affiliated with any organization.

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Challenges in Public Libraries

Newberg Public Library, Newberg

- *Devils and Demons* by Rhoda Blumberg (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Too graphic, pictures realistic and frightening; topic was negative and degrading; detail provided could encourage children to undertake the activities described; objected to placement in the Children's Department.

Summary of events: Staff read the book and collected reviews and author information. Book retained in decision by Library Director, 8/26/88. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Multnomah County Library, Portland

- *A Snake's Body* by Joanna Cole (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Photographs of a python crushing and eating a chick would upset and sadden children.

Summary of events: Branch library staff received the challenge and forwarded it to the Youth Services Coordinator. Coordinator read the book and collected reviews and recommended booklists. Book retained in decision by Coordinator, 9/8/88. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *The Impact Zone* by Ray Maloney (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Profanity and sexual references; no cultural value; nothing more than a cheap paperback.

Summary of events: Youth Services Coordinator and YA Specialist read the book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by Coordinator, 1/23/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *I Know You, Al* by Constance Greene (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Too many sexual references; dwells too much on natural functions; presents divorce as a fact of life; derogatory remarks about friends.

Summary of events: Youth Services Coordinator read the book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by Coordinator, 1/23/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Cedar Mill Community Library, Portland

- *Annie On My Mind* by Nancy Garden (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Book portrays lesbian love and sex as normal; inappropriate for a young adult collection because the theme might confuse young women about their own sexuality and about best-friend relationships.

Summary of events: Staff read the book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by Youth Services Librarian, 10/5/88. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Springfield Public Library, Springfield

- *Mr. Wheatfield's Loft* by Isabel Cusack (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Profanity; appearance of the subject of prostitution.

Summary of events: Staff read the book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by Children's Librarian, 10/22/88. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Tigard Public Library, Tigard

- *Butterfly* by Paul Lowen (Adult)

Summary of objections: Explicit and depraved sex; unreal; extreme cruelty of the worst sort, both physical and psychological.

Summary of events: Library Board considered the reconsideration request. Reviews were collected and two board members reported on the book. Patron notified of meeting where issue was on the agenda but did not appear. Book retained in decision by Library Board, 11/9/88. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Douglas County Library, Roseburg

- *Liza Lou & the Yeller Belly Swamp* by Mercer Mayer (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Scary pictures; reference to boiling children; image of swamp devil jumping in ear and stealing soul.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by library staff and Library Director, 11/16/88. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *My Life as a Body* by Norma Klein (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Condone homosexuality and premarital sex; fosters peer pressure; leads to unhealthy, unwholesome sexual attitudes on a personal level; does nothing to stem the tide of social and moral ills this nation faces.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book reclassified from children's collection to young adult collection. Decision made by library staff and Library Director, 3/2/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *The Dallas Titans Get Ready for Bed* by Karla Kuskin (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Too graphic for early readers; children not ready for illustrations and conversations about jockstraps.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by library staff and Library Director, 3/7/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Halloween ABC* by Eve Merriam (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Devil worshipping; not appropriate for young children.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book reclassified from picture book section to juvenile poetry section. Decision made by library staff and Library Director, 5/15/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Prelude to World War II* by Robert T. Elson (Adult)

Summary of objections: Nudity and violent pictures harmful to child researching the war.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by library staff and Library Director, 6/2/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

- *Don't Call Me Little Bunny* by Gregoire Solotareff (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: No redeeming factor in this story; doing wrong is okay; by choosing evil the character gets away with bad behavior.

Summary of events: Staff read book and collected reviews. Book retained in decision by library staff and Library Director, 6/21/89. Letter sent; no further appeal filed.

Seaside Public Library, Seaside

- *Forces that Drive* (series of paintings) Artist – Bill Lutz

Summary of objections: Objection to children viewing the paintings because of nudity; impact on children can be harmful.

Summary of events: The paintings by a local artist were hung in the Discovery Room of the Library, as artwork is usually displayed. Three of the paintings needed extra wall space and were hung in the children's section of the library. A minister requested in writing to the Library Board that the paintings be removed, at least from the children's section. Paintings retained in decision by Library Board. Individual made the same request in writing to the City Council; verbal complaints and verbal support were also registered. Council did not make the issue an agenda item but waited to see if public comment was offered about the issue. No public comment was forthcoming. Paintings remained on display for the full month scheduled, 5/89.

Challenges In School Library Media Centers

North Bend High School, North Bend

- *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* by Barbara G. Walker (Adult)

Summary of objections: The things discussed in this book are of no benefit to anyone; cited specific sexual and religious passages.

Summary of events: After submission of a formal "Reconsideration Request" by a parent who objected to its use in a library skills assignment, the principal removed the book pending review. Review committee read the book and collected reviews, and discussed the objections. Committee recommended to Superintendent that book be returned to reference shelf. Book retained as a reference book, but use is restricted to non-required assignments, in decision by Superintendent, 10/24/88.

La Grande Middle School, La Grande

- *Space Station Seventh Grade* by Jerry Spinelli (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Profanity, sexual obscenity, and immoral values; no literary value to the book; sexually and socially degrading; teaches students to downgrade values and be disrespectful to others.

Summary of events: Two parents submitted the "Request for Reconsideration" forms. A review committee of three school staff persons and one citizen read the book and collected reviews, and received written statements of support for the book. Committee recommended to the School Board that the book be retained. The issue was put on the agenda at a School Board meeting and testimony from the parents and from the librarian was received. Book was retained in decision by the School Board, 12/14/88.

South Prairie Elementary School, Tillamook

- *Bumps in the Night* by Harry Allard (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: A medium and seances are in the story.

Summary of events: After submission of formal challenge, a committee of citizens, teachers, librarian, and an administrator read the book and collected reviews. Committee recommended to the School Board that the book be retained. Action delayed for several months. Book retained in decision by School Board, 1/89.

Whitford Intermediate School, Beaverton

- *The Stand*, by Stephen King (Adult)

Summary of objections: Sexual language, casual sex, and violence; book is suitable for adults, doesn't believe author wrote it for children; like showing 12, 13, and 14 year olds "R" rated movies.

Summary of events: Book was newly acquired in library and was in-process awaiting a decision on where it should be classified. A ninth-grader asked to read it and permission was given. Parent objected to it and filed a formal "Request for Reconsideration." A committee of the parent, the principal, and two librarians met, the circumstances were noted and the literary merit and reference information in the book were pointed out. Book was restricted to ninth-grade students with parental consent in decision made by committee, 1/13/89.

Crook County Middle School, Prineville

- *To Take A Dare* by Crescent Dragonwagon and Paul Zindel (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Bad language; inappropriate for middle school students; if we do not allow [objectionable] language to be spoken in school we are condoning such language by allowing book to remain on shelf.

Summary of events: A teacher filed the written request for reconsideration after a verbal challenge to the book resulted in a decision by the librarian that the book had merit and should be retained. A review committee of 2 citizens, 2 librarians, and one counselor was appointed. The committee read the book and collected reviews, and recommended to the School Board to retain the book. A motion was placed before the School Board to remove the book from the library. Decision tabled until Board members read the book. Book restricted to eight graders in decision of the School Board, 1/16/89.

- *Angel Dust Blues* by Todd Strasser (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Explicit and erotic, pornographic trash; full of language which schools do not allow in the classroom, or at school functions, so why in the library?

Summary of events: Objections to the book informally initiated by a staff member and taken to the community by way of a petition distributed through local churches. Librarian filed a "Request for Reconsideration" form with the intent that the book needed to be considered in a formal materials review process. Review committee is in the process of reaching a recommendation. Decision not yet final.

Ochoco Elementary School, Prineville

- *The Restless Dead: Ghostly Tales from Around the World* by Daniel Cohen (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Totally preoccupied with the macabre, occult, demonic activity, nightmares, unnecessary fear, and an unhealthy interest in the occult; no redeeming literary value for school use.

Summary of events: Review committee read the book and recommended that the book be retained. Book retained in decision by the School Board, 1989.

Pilot Butte Junior High School, Bend

- *The Wolfman of Beacon Hill* by Kathleen Kilgore (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Theme and presentation of the subject matter; slang and other language is degrading, demeaning, and offensive; material does not enlighten, up-lift, or encourage character building traits; focus on the seamy side of life; clear message that it is alright to flaunt authority and use objectionable language.

Summary of events: A review committee read the book and collected reviews. Committee recommended that the book be retained. Book retained without restriction in decision by School Board, 1989.

Ackerman Junior High School, Canby

- *The Devil's Piper* by Susan Price (Juvenile)
- *Gods or Demons?* by A.M. Lightner (Juvenile)
- *The Prince in Waiting* by John Christopher (Young adult)
- *God, the Universe, and Hot Fudge Sundaes* by Norma Howe (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Could encourage young minds to pursue the occult, attempt suicide, or adopt ill attitudes; positive attitudes toward the occult; portraying the Bible as myth and ridicule toward Christianity; secular humanist indoctrination.

Summary of events: An initial list of twenty-two books were read by a citizen in the summer of 1987. Twelve of these books were formally challenged. A materials review committee took all year to read the books and collected reviews, and made a recommendation to retain all the books. The books were retained in a decision by the Superintendent. Parent appealed the decision on the above four titles to the School Board in September, 1988. The appeal was withdrawn pending a year long policy review of the District's materials selection policy and procedures for reconsideration of materials. The books were retained during the policy review and the School Board will consider the revised policies this Fall, 1989.

Beaverton School District, Beaverton

- *The Kid Who Only Hit Homers* by Matt Christopher (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Mention of the occult, witchcraft, and astrology.

Summary of events: Parent filed "Request for Reconsideration" against book in an elementary school library. A review committee of teachers, administrators, librarian and community members reviewed the objections, and read the book and collected reviews. Committee recommended that the book be retained as it clearly met the district's selection criteria for library materials. Book retained in decision by Deputy Superintendent, 2/89.

David Hill Elementary School, Hillsboro

- *Alanna* by Tamara Pierce (Young adult)
- *In the Hand of the Goddess* by Tamara Pierce (Young adult)
- *The Woman Who Rides Like A Man* by Tamara Pierce (Young adult)

Summary of objections: Use of amulet to prevent pregnancy; sexual references.

Summary of events: Library staff member personally objected to these books and removed them from the library without submitting a formal challenge. A teacher and administrator looking for the books discovered that the staff person had removed them. District's policy was clarified that the process for challenging materials applied to staff equally as to citizens. Books returned to shelf, 1989.

St. Paul High School, St Paul

- *If Beale Street Could Talk* by James Baldwin (Adult)

Summary of objections: sexually explicit passages; profane and obscene language; offensive remarks directed toward Christianity.

Summary of events: Parent of a middle school student who takes three classes in the high school building objected to the book in the high school library. A review committee of four staff persons and two parents read the book and collected reviews, and discussed the book in reference to the objections. Committee recommended to the School Board that the book be retained but restricted to students with parental consent. Book removed in a decision by the School Board, 3/28/89. The School Board also voted to restrict any student younger than high school age from checking out fiction from the high school library.

Little Butte Intermediate School, Eagle Point

- *Karen Kepplewhite is the World's Best Kisser* by Eve Bunting (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Too mature for the elementary class students in the school.

Summary of events: Parent filed formal challenge. Review committee of four staff members and three citizens read the book and collected reviews and took testimony from the objecting parent. Committee recommended to the School Board that the material be retained. Book retained in decision by School Board, 4/4/89.

- *The Magic Grandfather* by Jay Williams (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Use of swear words and how they were handled; use of magic; deals with witches.

Summary of events: Decision not yet final.

Cascades Elementary School, Lebanon

- *Zerelda's Ogre* by Tomi Ungerer (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Evil, disgusting, bloody; frightening for children; very inappropriate illustrations a child's book, that is, pictures of children being eaten.

Summary of events: Parent verbally objected to the book to the building principal. Parent filled out "Reconsideration Request" form which was submitted to the Superintendent of the school district. Although the district maintains a policy and procedures for materials review, the Superintendent chose not to appoint a review committee. Book removed in decision by Superintendent, 4/89.

Salem-Kelzer School District, Salem

- *Then Again, Maybe I Won't* by Judy Blume (Juvenile)

Summary of objections: Dismal tale of a young boy's inability to cope and his very inappropriate responses to the changes taking place in his life; detrimental attitude towards a child's natural maturity and his relationship to his parents; raises questions about sexual arousal that elementary children are too young to experience and would leave them with the wrong attitude towards the opposite sex.

Summary of events: Three parents requested that the book be removed from all elementary school libraries in the district. An Instructional Materials Review Committee read the book and discussed reviews. Four committee members voted to retain the book without restriction, one voted to retain with restriction, and two voted to remove the book. The recommendation to retain without restriction was given to the School Board. Parents and school library media services coordinator made statements to the Board and the Board received copies of the book to read. Book retained without restriction by decision of School Board, 6/27/89.

Information Requests to the Clearinghouse

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse received 40 requests for information and assistance during its second year of operation. Seventeen of the requests were for information about titles which were being formally challenged. Seventeen of the requests were for information to prepare library staff members to defend titles which the staff had some reason to believe might be challenged. The State Library reference staff provided reviews and other information responding to all of these requests. The Clearinghouse also received two requests for assistance with preparing collection development policies containing intellectual freedom policies and procedures for the process of reconsidering materials, and three requests for assistance in dealing with donations of tracts and periodicals of specific religious organizations. The Library Development staff provided sample policies and suggested procedures in these cases. Consulting about planning a Banned Books Week display was also provided.

The Clearinghouse was contacted for information about challenges against library materials by at least four newspaper reporters over the course of the year. The death threat against Salman Rushdie for his novel, *The Satanic Verses*, generated interest in information about censorship against books for feature articles and editorial columns. To the best of the Clearinghouse's knowledge no Oregon library was challenged for providing access to *The Satanic Verses*. Reporters also became interested in library policies and censorship of books when an Oregon county Board of Commissioners voted not to adopt the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights* as a procedural document for a newly appointed library advisory committee. The objection was offered that the *Bill of Rights* did not explicitly prohibit pornography in libraries.

Cooperative and Educational Activities

The Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse was established in 1987 in a cooperative effort of the Oregon State Library, the Oregon Department of Education, the Oregon Library Association, the Oregon Educational Media Association, and the American Association of University Women. The coordinator of the Clearinghouse serves on the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee. This year the Intellectual Freedom Committee monitored bills affecting intellectual freedom and libraries introduced into the 1989 Oregon Legislative Assembly. The Clearinghouse assisted the Oregon Library Association in tracking, analyzing, and preparing to oppose three bills which sought to amend the free speech clause of the *Oregon Constitution* in a restrictive manner. The American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom provided legal analyses of the bills to the Clearinghouse and to the Oregon Library Association. The OLA membership voted to actively oppose the bills as an organization. The bills died in Committee.

The coordinator of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse attended an Intellectual Freedom Leadership Development Institute sponsored by the American Library Association in May, 1988. A commitment was made by the State Library to sponsor at least one workshop on intellectual freedom within the next eighteen months. In June, 1989, the State Library fulfilled

that commitment by sponsoring three half-day workshops on *Upholding Intellectual Freedom: Principles, Policies, and Procedures for Libraries*. Repeated in three geographic locations in Oregon, the workshop was presented by the coordinator of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse. A total of thirty-eight library staff and board members attended the workshops.

A network of Oregon authors interested in serving as a resource in defense of intellectual freedom was identified in 1989. The banning of James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*, following on the heels of the Salman Rushdie incident motivated one Portland author to offer assistance to the Clearinghouse, and the authors network was an outcome of this offer. The authors can be contacted with requests for support in particular challenge situations.

The Clearinghouse sends quarterly summaries of the reconsideration reports received by the Clearinghouse to the chairperson of the OLA Intellectual Freedom Committee, the OEMA Intellectual Freedom Committee, and to the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom. A new cooperative relationship for sharing information was developed this year with the People for the American Way, a Washington, D.C. based organization which monitors censorship of all types in public schools. That organization's annual report, *Attacks on the Freedom to Learn*, which was released in August, 1989, reflected the data reported to them by the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse.

Goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

The goal of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse is to uphold the principles of the Library Bill of Rights in all types of libraries by improving communication between librarians, board members, professional associations, and other concerned groups in Oregon about challenges to intellectual freedom, and by increasing awareness as to how threats to intellectual freedom can be overcome.

Objectives of the Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

- To establish a central clearinghouse to collect reports about challenges to intellectual freedom in all types of Oregon libraries.
- To provide information about challenged materials to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians when requests for reconsideration of materials are formally registered.
- To provide information to public library directors and library board members, school media center librarians, and academic librarians about establishing appropriate policies and procedures before a challenge to intellectual freedom occurs.
- To cooperate with other persons and groups concerned with intellectual freedom or related issues.